
Congressman Greg Walden's Oregon Congressional Connection

Your Direct Link to the News and Events in the Nation's Capital

Monday, June 17, 2002

Dear Fellow Oregonian:

This week's House calendar is bursting at the seams as we try to tackle the federal appropriations process and other legislative priorities before the August district work period. This week we'll be taking up legislation to reduce the paperwork burden on small businesses, reform the way national monuments are established, cut down on fraud, waste and abuse within the Social Security Administration, and make permanent the IRA and pension expansions contained in the tax relief bill that was passed and signed into law last year.

The Resources Committee is also scheduled to hold a hearing tomorrow and Wednesday on legislation to reform the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to include peer review of ESA science. The measure we'll be examining tomorrow is similar to legislation I introduced last year as a result of the conflict in the Klamath Basin that stemmed in part from the unintended consequences of the ESA. You can listen to this hearing live, and I hope you'll tune in.

In this week's Oregon Congressional Connection I've included some of the news from Capitol Hill and around Oregon that's taken place since I last emailed you, including our efforts to make last year's repeal of the marriage penalty permanent. You'll also find the schedule for House committee hearings, information on the House floor schedule for the coming week, and an update on the Klamath Basin water crisis. As always, you can find additional information about developments in Congress on my web site at www.walden.house.gov, which I've just updated.

If you have any questions or comments about this e-newsletter or anything else taking place in Congress and our nation's capital, please e-mail me at greg.walden@mail.house.gov. My staff and I will get back to you as quickly as possible.

I hope you find this week's Oregon Congressional Connection informative. Thank you.

God Bless America.

Congressman Greg Walden

In This Week's Edition

- Klamath Basin Update
- District Wrap-Up
- News from Capitol Hill
- On the Horizon
- Committee Hearings
- On the House Floor
- Second District trivia

Klamath Basin Update

Senator Gordon Smith, Senator Ron Wyden and I teamed up on June 11 in sending a letter to President Bush to reiterate our support for an increased federal investment in the Klamath Basin to help fund a number of projects that are central to resolving the ongoing water crisis.

As you probably know, House negotiators were successful in securing \$50 million in funding that was specifically earmarked for the Klamath Basin in the 2002 Farm Bill, the 6-year, multi-billion dollar spending bill that oversees the nation's federal agriculture programs. The Klamath funding will come from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) section of the bill and will be available to qualified producers to pay for projects to improve water quality and quantity in the Basin. Specifically, the money will be used to improve irrigation systems, enhance irrigation efficiencies, convert to the production of less water-intensive agricultural practices, improve water storage through water banking and groundwater recharge, and mitigate the effects of drought.

While this \$50 million will go a long way toward addressing the conditions that led to last year's water shut-off, the Basin will need a sustained federal investment to fund a number of projects beyond the level provided in the Farm Bill. For that reason, Smith, Wyden and I requested an additional \$125 million from the water conservation funds provided in the bill. In conversations I've had with Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman and other key administration officials, resolving the Klamath Basin water crisis remains a high priority of the Bush Administration. Sen. Smith, Sen. Wyden and I are simply keeping the pressure on the administration so the needs of the Basin don't slip from their radar screen.

Our letter to President Bush also stressed our support for authorizing the reimbursement of operation and maintenance funds to irrigators in the Basin who did not receive water last year as a result of the water shut-off. I introduced legislation last year in the House

to refund these fees based on my belief that paying operations and maintenance fees for the canals when virtually no water was delivered is fundamentally unfair. My legislation, the Klamath Basin Emergency Operation and Maintenance Refund Act of 2001 (H.R. 2828) passed unanimously in the House on November 13, 2001. Sen. Smith introduced a similar measure on December 13, 2001, but it has not yet been passed by the Senate.

Our letter also urged funding to complete a feasibility study of fish passage issues at Chiloquin Dam on the Sprague River, which the federal government estimates blocks 95 percent of the spawning habitat of the endangered sucker fish. The Farm Bill contained a provision authorizing this study, which was based on legislation I introduced in the House in July of 2001, the Chiloquin Dam Fish Passage Feasibility Study Act of 2001 (H.R. 2585). This bill, which was drafted in consultation with the Klamath Tribes and the Modoc Point Irrigation District, passed unanimously in the House on October 30, 2001, but was not acted upon in the U.S. Senate prior to the passage of the Farm Bill.

In addition, Sen. Smith, Sen. Wyden and I requested funding for a number of projects in the Basin whose need has long been recognized. These include fish passage improvements such as screens on the A canal and other diversions to benefit sucker fish and coho salmon, as well as studies on Upper Klamath Lake refugia availability and vegetation for suckers. Finally, the letter highlights the need for examining the role of tributaries and wetlands in restoring habitat for coho salmon.

The projects that we identified in our letter to President Bush represent vital and long-overdue improvements to the Klamath Basin. While we've had a number of successes on the Klamath front this year, working toward a lasting solution to the water woes in the Basin will continue to be among my very highest priorities.

District Wrap-Up

Northwest Pulp and Paper Association meeting

On Friday, June 14, I spoke at the 2nd annual meeting of the Northwest Pulp and Paper Association in Hood River. Among the topics I discussed were my efforts to bring common sense improvements to the Endangered Species Act (scroll down to learn more about my legislation to require peer review of data used in ESA decisions), as well as the poor state of the federal government's forest health policies.

No natural resource is more closely identified with Oregon or more vital to its economy than timber. In many of the small, rural towns of central, southern, and eastern Oregon that I represent in the House, the timber industry is the lifeblood of the community. Unfortunately, many of the federal policies that govern the management of our forests leave them at serious risk of catastrophic wildfire, insect infestation and disease and threaten the jobs that depend upon the health of our forests. These policies, which are often implemented in the name of protecting our natural environment, frequently harm not only the forests they are intended to protect, but the communities whose economies rely on a stable timber industry.

Of the 192 million acres of forestland that make up the National Forest System, 72 million acres are at risk of catastrophic wildfire and 33 million acres are at risk of insect infestation and disease. Yet the U.S. Forest Service plans to treat only 2 million acres of at-risk forest annually. Just as alarmingly, I've heard from a number of federal officials that a real concern exists over the gradual disappearance of the personnel infrastructure needed to perform vital forest health practices. Timber industry employees perform a wide variety of forest health practices that the federal government simply lacks the manpower to perform on its own. With so many timber industry jobs being lost every year, a crisis is approaching that will have grave repercussions on the health of our forests. I've shared this concern with Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth and will continue to make the point that far from a threat to our forests, the timber industry is a critical component of forest health.

Since my election to Congress, I've repeatedly made the case to federal officials in Washington, D.C. that when it comes to the Pacific Northwest, healthy forests mean healthy communities. Without the former, the latter is impossible. Especially in these tough economic times for the communities I represent, it's important that we craft sensible forest health policies that ensure the protection of our forests while allowing for a stable timber industry to provide jobs for local residents and tax revenue for fiscally starved rural communities.

News from Capitol Hill

On Thursday, June 13, the House took action to eliminate once and for all one of the most unfair taxes that remain part of the U.S. tax code – the marriage penalty. This quirk in the law forces married couples to pay higher income tax rates than unmarried couples earning an equal combined income. The marriage penalty causes over 65,000 couples in central, southern and eastern Oregon to pay an average of \$1,400 a year more in taxes to the IRS than unmarried couples.

The marriage penalty is a punitive tax that actually discourages people from getting married. That's just not right. The tax code should never erect obstacles to marriage, especially by penalizing the second income earner in a family. Since my election to the U.S. House in 1998, I've cosponsored a number of measures to repeal the marriage penalty in both the 106th and 107th Congresses, and I'm pleased that we're on our way to burying this tax for good.

As you're probably aware, Congress passed a comprehensive tax relief package last year that included a provision to eliminate the marriage penalty by gradually increasing the standard deduction for married couples filing jointly, beginning in 2005. On May 21, the House passed legislation to accelerate that relief by increasing the standard deduction in 2003. However, the tax-cutting bill will expire after December 31, 2010 because of a "sunset" provision that was included to comply with Senate procedural rules. As a result

of this sunset, after the marriage penalty has been phased out by the year 2010, it will be fully reinstated on January 1, 2011.

The Permanent Marriage Penalty Relief Act of 2002 (HR 4019) was introduced to remove the sunset provision and ensure that the repeal of the marriage penalty does not expire. I was proud to cosponsor and vote in favor of this measure, which passed by a strongly bipartisan vote of 271 to 142.

I'm hopeful the Senate will follow suit so that we can get this bill on the President's desk as quickly as possible.

On the Horizon

House Resources Committee Hearing on Peer Review of ESA Science

The House Committee on Resources is scheduled to hold hearings tomorrow, June 18 and Wednesday, June 19 to examine legislation that would require the peer review of science used in the implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The measure being considered during the hearings, the Sound Science for Endangered Species Act Planning Act of 2002 (H.R. 4840), is nearly identical to legislation I introduced in August of 2001 in response to the water crisis in the Klamath Basin.

The crisis in the Basin is a tragic example of why peer reviewed science is essential. Peer review of data is a concept that is widely recognized within the medical and scientific communities, and it's time it is incorporated into the Endangered Species Act. Any time the government undertakes an effort that can have profound effects on people and communities, it should strive to make sure the data it uses is as close to definitive as possible. One of the most effective ways of doing that is to allow other scientists to review the work of government biologists and evaluate whether their data supports the actions they're recommending. I look forward to sharing with the Resources Committee how the devastation in the Klamath Basin might have been avoided if this bill had been public law two years ago.

H.R. 4840 was introduced by Resources Committee Chairman James Hansen and includes most of the provisions contained in both my ESA reform bill and similar legislation introduced by Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA). Like my bill, H.R. 4840 requires that every proposed listing, de-listing, consultation and recovery effort aimed at protecting endangered species be subject to peer review by a panel of non-biased scientists. Both measures would also expand the current ESA requirement that "the best scientific and commercial data available" be used for listings and other actions. The new guidelines would require the federal agencies to give greater weight to scientific or commercial data that is empirical or has been field-tested or peer-reviewed. The measures also stipulate that listing actions must be supported by field data on the species in question.

The hearings will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday at 11:00 AM (PST) in room 1334 of the Longworth House Office Building. During Tuesday's hearing, a number of my colleagues on the Resources Committee will provide input on the unintended consequences of the ESA and the need to incorporate peer review of ESA science. Wednesday's hearing will feature testimony by representatives of the federal agencies tasked with overseeing the implementation of the ESA.

To listen to a live broadcast of the Resources Committee hearings, click on the following link: <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/audio.htm>.

Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit

This week the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, of which I'm a member, will be holding legislative meetings to craft a prescription drug benefit for Medicare recipients. Details of the prescription drug plan are not yet available, and the meetings are expected to take much of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to complete. We should have a better picture of what the committee's proposal will look like later in the week. I'll be sure to provide detailed information on this important subject in next week's Oregon Congressional Connection.

Committee Hearings – All Times Pacific

Tuesday, June 18, 2002

7:00 AM – House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit Subcommittee oversight hearing on, "Intermodalism: Moving America's People and Goods." To listen to this hearing live, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/transportation/>.

7:00 AM – House Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Efficiency, Financial Management and Intergovernmental Relations hearing on HR 1081, the Accountability for Presidential Records Act. For more information on this hearing, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/reform>.

7:00 AM – House International Relations Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia oversight hearing on recent developments in the Middle East. To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: http://www.house.gov/international_relations/fullhear.htm.

7:00 AM – House Judiciary Committee full committee markup of HR 3215, the Combating Illegal Gambling and Modernization Act; HR 1452, the Family Reunification Act of 2001; HR 4623, the Child Obscenity and Pornography Prevention Act of 2002; HR 4477, the Sex Tourism Prohibition Improvement Act of 2002; HR 4679, the Lifetime Consequences for Sex Offenders Act of 2002; HR 4858, to improve access to physicians in medically underserved areas; and HR 4864, the Antiterrorism Explosives Act of 2002.

For more information on this hearing, click on the following link:

<http://www.house.gov/judiciary>.

8:00 AM – House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Oversight hearing on retirement security and defined benefit pension plans. For more information regarding this hearing, click on the following link: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov>.

11:00 AM – House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations hearing on "The Rising Cost of Health Care: How are Employers and Employees Responding?" To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/committee/webcast.htm>.

11:00 AM – House Financial Services Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Insurance and Government Sponsored Enterprises hearing on, "Insurance Regulation and Competition for the 21st Century." For more information on this hearing, click on the following link: <http://financialservices.house.gov>.

11:00 AM – House Resources Committee on full committee hearing on HR 4840, the Sound Science for Endangered Species Act Planning Act of 2002. To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/audio.htm>.

12:30 PM – House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security hearing to examine Social Security disability programs. For more information regarding this hearing, click on the following link: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov>.

1:00 PM – House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security hearing on HR 912, the Innocence Protection Act (death penalty reform). For more information on this hearing, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/judiciary>.

Wednesday, June 19, 2002

7:00 AM – House Budget Committee full committee hearing on "Social Security: the Long-Term Budget Implications." For more information on this hearing, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/budget/hearings.htm>.

7:00 AM – House International Relations Subcommittee on Europe hearing on "NATO and Enlargement A United State and NATO Perspective." Witnesses: Gen. Joseph Ralston, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. European Command. To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: http://www.house.gov/international_relations/fullhear.htm.

7:00 AM – House Resources Committee full committee oversight hearing on the Washington Aqueduct and the effects of its discharge on the C&O Canal National Historic Park and the endangered shortnose sturgeon. To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/audio.htm>.

7:00 AM – House Small Business Committee full committee hearing on the impact of the proposed INS tourist visa change on small tourism businesses. Witness: James Ziglar, Commissioner, Immigration and Naturalization Service. To listen to this hearing live, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/smbiz/audio/index.html>.

7:00 AM – House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation markup of H.R.4635, the Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act. To listen to this hearing live, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/transportation/>.

10:00 AM – House International Relations Committee full committee hearing on "Foreign Government Complicity in Human Trafficking: A Review of the State Department's 2002 'Trafficking in Persons Report'." Witnesses: Paula Dobriansky, undersecretary, Global Affairs, State Department. To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: http://www.house.gov/international_relations/fullhear.htm.

11:00 AM – House Resources Committee full committee hearing on HR 4840, the Sound Science for Endangered Species Act Planning Act of 2002." (Part Two). To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/audio.htm>.

Thursday, June 20, 2002

6:30 AM – House Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health hearing on HR 3802, to amend the Education Land Grant Act to require the Secretary of Agriculture to pay the costs of environmental reviews with respect to conveyances. To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/audio.htm>.

7:00 AM – House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Workforce Protection hearing on "An Assessment of the Use of Union Dues for Political Purposes: Is the Law Being Followed or Violated?" To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/committee/webcast.htm>.

7:00 AM – House Science Subcommittee on Environment, Technology and Standards hearing on "Research Priorities for Aquatic Invasive Species." To listen to this hearing live, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/science/hearings/index.htm>.

7:45 AM – House International Relations Committee full committee hearing on "Oil Diplomacy: Facts and Myths Behind Foreign Oil Dependency." Witnesses: Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham; Alan Larson, undersecretary, Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs, State Department. To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: http://www.house.gov/international_relations/fullhear.htm.

11:00 AM – House Government Reform Committee full committee hearing on the President's plan to create a Department of Homeland Security. Witnesses: Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge. For more information on this hearing, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/reform>.

11:00 AM – House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit oversight hearing on "Federal Transit Capital Grants Programs." To listen to this hearing live, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/transportation/>.

On the House Floor – All Times Pacific

On Monday, June 17, the House will meet at 9:30 AM for morning hour and 11:00 AM for legislative business. The House will consider a number of bills under suspension of the rules.

On Tuesday, June 18, the House will meet at 7:30 AM for morning hour and at noon for legislative business. The House will consider a number of measures, including:

-- HR 327, the [Small Business Paperwork Relief Act](#). This bill requires federal agencies to ease the burden of collecting information for businesses that hire fewer than 25 employees. The House approved its version on March 15, 2002 by a vote of 418 - 0, and the Senate adopted an amendment to the House version by unanimous consent on May 22, when it took up the bill on the Senate floor. The Senate amendment creates a new "small business ombudsman" in each federal agency and provides instructions for paperwork assistance information to be made available online. The House will consider the amended bill.

-- HR 4070, the [Social Security Program Protection Act of 2002](#). This bill provides the Social Security Administration (SSA) with additional tools to curb waste, fraud and abuse. Primarily, the bill provides new safeguards for the nearly 7 million Social Security and SSI beneficiaries who use a "representative payee" to receive their benefits. It also clarifies the SSA's ability to impose penalties, deny benefits to felons, disallow participation of disqualified attorneys and other reforms.

On Wednesday and Thursday, June 19 and 20, the House will meet at 7:00 AM for legislative business. On Friday, June 21, the House will meet at 6:00 AM for legislative business, and no votes are expected after 11:00 AM. The House will consider a number of measures, including:

-- HR 2114, the [National Monument Fairness Act of 2002](#). This bill clarifies the procedure for declaring a national monument. Specifically, the bill requires consultation between the president and the governor and congressional delegation from the state where a proposed monument is located. Any designation would expire after two years unless Congress approves it by law.

-- HR 3389, the [National Sea Grant College Program Act Amendments of 2002](#). This bill amends the National Sea Grant College Program Act to emphasize ocean and coastal resources conservation and management, and to encourage collaboration between

academia and the scientists and programs of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

-- HR 1979, the [Airport Safety, Security and Air Service Improvement Act](#). This bill authorizes the Secretary of Transportation to provide grants for the construction of air traffic control towers.

-- HR 4931, the [Retirement Savings Security Act of 2002](#). This bill makes permanent the IRA and pension expansions enacted by the Bush tax relief signed into law last year.

Second District Trivia

This week's question: Which rivers form most of the northern border between Oregon and Washington State and most of the eastern boundary between Oregon and Idaho?

Bonus question: How long are each of these rivers?

For the answer to this question and to take a crack at past questions, click here:

<http://www.walden.house.gov/trivia/trivia.htm>

For more information on these and other issues, please visit my website at www.walden.house.gov or call my Washington, D.C., office at (202) 225-6730. You can also call my Medford office toll-free at (800) 533-3033. If you have any questions or comments, please send them to dallas.boyd@mail.house.gov. If you'd like to be removed from the "Oregon Congressional Connection" list simply send an email to newsletter-request@or02list.house.gov and type UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line.